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CHRISTMAS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

As Christmas Day draws near, and our minds are filled with the true holiday spirit, it is appropriate as well as interesting to think about Christmas celebrations in other countries.

It might be well to first notice some of the customs very near our own homes. A regular Christmas performance in Alaska is known as "going around with the star." A large figure of a star covered with bright colored material is carried at the head of a procession of people who go in this form from house to house every night during Christmas week. They are warmly welcomed at each place and after singing carols, and enjoying cakes and other good things they go to the next house.

The natives of Hawaii say that Santa Claus goes over to the islands in a boat. Perhaps he does, for he gets there some way. He is looked for as eagerly there as he is in the lands of snow and ice and even if he does nearly melt in his fur, he never disappoints these children.

The Filipino looks upon Christmas as a great religious festival. On Christmas Eve the churches are opened and the coming of the great day is celebrated by a mass at midnight. Mass is held every hour during Christmas day so that every one may have an opportunity to attend. Many religious plays are also given in the Philippines. During Christmas week the young people hold merry gatherings in the open air, where they dance and play games.

In Russia it is not Christmas day but Christmas Eve that is the great time of delight. It is then that the beautiful bright Christmas trees are enjoyed. Every one in the family receives numerous presents and great merry making takes place. Christmas day is spent in prayer and fasting.

Christmas Eve is the greatest day in Spain, also. That night large bonfires are built everywhere, especially around the churches. Shops are brilliantly lighted and crowds of people gather in groups, after doing their last shopping, and join in singing and games around the fires. Everyone, including the poorest, in Denmark, has a Christmas tree. Banquets of roast goose, apple cake and rice porridge, take place in many homes. An almond is always put in the porridge, and the person who finds it gets another present. The trees are lighted at dusk and the children dance around them and sing. This performance opens the festivities; then the presents are given, after which the young people dance.

St. Nicholas is the yearly visitor in Holland. On Christmas Eve the children place their wooden shoes by the chimney where they believe St. Nicholas, with the help of his little black slave, will fill them.

The Children of France watch for the baby Jesus instead of Santa Claus. The night before Christmas they place their shoes by the chimney, where they know the child Jesus will be sure to find them and fill them with candy. Christmas is a real gift giving day in France for every one gives and no one is slighted.

There is no nation in the world that makes as much of Christmas as the Germans. It is said that the ladies of the family spend months preparing for it. Several weeks before Christmas the shop windows in Germany are decorated. In the smaller towns where Christmas shop windows are impossible, the Christmas spirit is still there, for rows and rows of Christmas trees of all sizes are put on sale.

The young folks of Germany are proud of that fact that, as far as can be learned, the tree which is so important a part of Christmas in many lands was first used in Germany. Before our ancestors came to the United States the little children of Germany were decking Christmas trees with candles and presents. In some places the only presents that are put on the tree are those intended for the parents. The other gifts are hidden in the pockets of the givers and presented after the parents have had theirs. However the tree is never missing in any home, and sometimes every child in the family has a tree of his own.

CHRISTMAS MEANING

When the Christmas season comes, with all the bustle and flurry of its preparation, few people stop to think about the real meaning of the day. We know that families are reunited, joy reigns and peace is present. Why? Christmas is a special thanksgiving day which commemorates the greatest thing for which we should be thankful, the greatest gift God has given to the world—the blessing of Christianity. As gifts were first given to the Christ child, we now give them to each other, significant of love and friendship. There is no way which would be too great to celebrate Christmas—it means so big a thing.

So midst our joy and happiness, let us think seriously and earnestly of the real Christmas Day meaning.

Oldest Religious Celebration.
The Jewish feast of the passover is one of the most undying links that bind together this very old world. It is the oldest religious celebration known to mankind. It had its birth on the banks of the Nile 4,000 years ago in the twilight of history.

LITANY.

From trafficking with treason—
From virtue for reward—
From hatred without reason—
From flinching from the sword—
From sin of unbelieving—
From over quick forgiving—
From too great ease of living—
Good Lord deliver us.

From vision blind to beauty—
Intolerance and cant—
Injustice masked as duty—
Unsound and arrogant—
From ancient wrong unrighted—
From counsel unheeded—
From bigotry bequeathed—
Good Lord deliver us.

From friends' well-meant intentions—
From scars of others' faith—
From unasked interventions—
From fear of life or death—
From worship of the blameless—
Reform misprized and aimless—
From prideless ways and shameless—
Good Lord deliver us.

—C. T. Davis, in Arkansas Gazette

STRANGE MANIA FOR DEATH

People of Russian Village Commence Suicide in a Body, and in Peculiarly Horrible Form.

A case of mass suicide is reported from the village of Opatovo, Russia, in the Tamboff province, where the peasants to the number of more than 300, assembled together, men, women and children, in a spacious wooden bathhouse. Doors, windows and other apertures were hermetically sealed and nailed up. In the cellar firewood saturated with petroleum was in great quantities. Fire was set to the building. Everybody in the building perished in the conflagration, if not suffocated previously by the fumes. All around the building armed guards had been left, so that the dreadful sacrifice should be carried out undisturbed. When the awful thing was consummated the guards shot each other. A few men lost their nerve at the last moment and survived to tell the tale. This scarcely believable incident takes us back a long way. Mass suicide is not unknown in the history of Russia. Brought to despair by administrative persecution or to escape famine and epidemic, entire villages have committed wholesale suicide. Often this was the result of religious fanaticism. Peter I, who was some what Bolshevik in the enforcing of his reforms, was met in northern Russia by numerous confagurations involving hundreds of deaths. As late as the reign of Alexander III a case occurred in the south when a crowd of fanatics allowed themselves to be buried alive by their religious teachers.

Bulgaria Has Queer Taxes.

The peasants are now firmly established in power in Bulgaria and legislative bodies, both state and provincial, in which their representatives are in the majority, are engaged in transferring the burden of taxation to the shoulders of the despised city folk.

The district council of Rousschouk has evolved the following taxes which it styles "American":

For carrying a parasol 50 levas, (nominally worth 19 cents each), yearly; for wearing skirts more than eleven inches above the ground or silk stockings, 500 levas; for wearing gloves between April 15 and September 15 without a doctor's certificate, 200 levas; for wearing jewelry, 300 levas; for keeping pet dogs, 500 levas; for use of walking canes by persons less than fifty years old in good health, 100 levas; for wearing shoes with tops exceeding eleven inches in height, 200 levas; for wearing fur tippets or muffs, 500 levas, and for using a baby carriage in cities, 200 levas.

Child's Call Reached Mother.

Although she has no knowledge of the occult or thought transference a mother heard the cry of her child, nine miles away. The woman together with her husband was sent to jail in Chicago, because they were unable to produce a note for \$700, necessary to the settlement of an estate. A month dragged by and there was no one to care for the three children, six, four and two years old. Social service workers finally took them to an orphan asylum. Henry, four, became ill and was taken to the isolation hospital. At about the same hour his mother, unaware of what had been done, became hysterical in the jail and declared her child was dying and calling for her. Jail authorities thought her demented and transferred her to the jail hospital. Social service workers went before the judge the next day and told him all three children would die unless their mother was restored to them, and he ordered her immediate release.

Water Needs of Dahlias.

As a general rule dahlias should never be watered. With good cultivation, enough moisture will be found in the soil to stimulate the roots' growth. In seasons of protracted drought, if they show any signs of wanting water, give it freely; enough to penetrate a foot below the surface. Superficial watering is worse than none at all, and this applies to other plants as well. More damage is done by such watering than when none is given.

Record for Gluttony!

An ex-alderman of New York ate, alone and unassisted, eleven pounds of beef-steak and twelve lamb chops at a dinner of the Federal club. The ex-alderman weighed 300 pounds before taking on the cargo. Is this a record?



SEA GULL RACES.

"I must tell you all about it," said the first Sea Gull to the Seaside Fairy. "In the first place the reason you saw us acting as we did was because we were running races. We were running what is known as relay races. Each one of us ran so far at a time, and then the next one ran."

"You see, all along the harbor, right out to the gate of the sea there are posts where there are buoys. Now on each of these posts was perched a sea gull. That was when you saw us. 'Well, we were all racing toward the river which is beyond the harbor, and so each time one of us raced to the next post beyond us, we shoved the sea gull off, which was on the post, and sent him on to another one.'

"Then he did the same to the next sea gull. You saw us doing that?" "Yes," said the Seaside Fairy, "and it did look so funny. Every one of you did the same thing. And you each moved the other away?"

"Just as you caught two of you couldn't get along together."

"Oh, but that wasn't what we meant," said the Sea Gull.

"It was simply that we were running our own kind of a race."

"What have you been doing today, Sea Side Fairy?"

"I was watching what was going on," said the Sea Side Fairy.

"I saw a little girl gathering many pretty shells to take to some children in a hospital. The children in the hospital can't get out and pick up the shells themselves and they will be glad to have the ones gathered for them today!"

"I once heard of a small boy in a hospital who played with a little toy swan and who used to have the swan sit upon a piece of blue paper to make believe the swan was in a real pond. And then someone gave him a sea shell which had really come from the sea, and he smelt the sea shell to see if it smelt salty!"

"Well, the Seaside Fairy sent this message to the little girl who gathered the shells today, for the little girl wanted those hospital children and this little hospital boy, to have some shells which had come right from the sea itself! And right along by the seashore."

"She found so many beautiful shells. Some were pink and others were blue, and some looked like little houses," she said.

"Of course, they were the shells where the Sand Children live after the shells are tossed up on the shore by old Mother Ocean."

"Then I saw a beautiful white butterfly with black spots. His wings were edged with deep blue and he was so beautiful. And I heard some-



"You Are Looking Impatient."

one say that the beautiful white butterfly looked almost artificial because he was so gorgeous looking.

"And it seemed strange to me that when people think things are very lovely, they say that they hardly look real, or that they look like lovely pictures!"

"And when people see lovely pictures they say how real and lovely they look. Just like the real things! Strange, Sea Gull, very strange, I say."

"But Sea Gull, you are looking impatient. You are moving your wings as though you wanted to be off."

"Yes, Seaside Fairy, I must be off, for we are going to have more races again this evening. You see, not only did we have our races going up to the harbor and beyond to the river, but we raced back again."

"And we found it was such fun that we want to run those races again."

"Good-by Seaside Fairy, you'll see us again."

And off flew the Sea Gull to run more races with his friends and family and relatives from the gate of the sea, up into the harbor, beyond to the river, and then back again.

"Good-by, Sea Gull," said the Seaside Fairy, and she smiled as she watched the Sea Gull soar up into the air and fly off!

A Misused Art.

It would be almost better not to learn to speak at all, than to use the magic of speech to wound and anger those about us. Who would suppose when the baby's little tongue is struggling with hard consonants and mysterious dipthongs, that she would master the most wonderful of all arts, only to be better equipped for wounding the hearts of her nearest and dearest? The art of speech is cruelly misused, unless it is used only for the highest things.—Girls' Companion.

In Another Sense.

She—"Before we were married you said you couldn't do enough for me." He—"Well, I guess time has proved that I was right."

Times for Gratitude.

There is much greatness of mind in the owning of a good turn as in the doing of it; and we must no more force a requital out of someone than be wanting to it.—Seneca.

THE NEW YEAR

A year is an arbitrary division of time, made for the purpose of enabling us to keep track of the passing events of history.

The beginning of a new year, or New Year's Day, is no more important than any other day, but because it marks the beginning of a new year we are accustomed to make it a special day.

This is the time for reviewing the past, and making plans for the future. We cannot plan intelligently for the future unless we keep in mind what has gone behind.

So, when we come to make our new year resolutions, we must, if we are to act intelligently, spend some little time in looking backward.

What have we done during the past year? And how have we done it?

What have been our successes? What have been our failures? Why did we succeed? Why did we fail?

These are deep questions, but we must meet them and answer them honestly, to ourselves at least, if we are to make the new year better in any particular than the one just ended.

All of us want success, but not all of us will be permitted to achieve it. It was a wise old philosopher who said: "It is not within the power of man to command success, Sempronius; but we can do more, we can deserve it."

And during this coming new year we can, all of us, strive to deserve success in whatever it is that we do.

The effort to deserve success will keep us so busy that we will have little time for wondering if we are

nearing success, and if we go at it in the right way we can get so much enjoyment out of the effort to deserve success that it won't matter very much whether we achieve what is regarded as success or not.

What is success, anyway? A great many people now believe that success consists not in what we get out of life as in what we put into life. More and more people are believing their lives on this basis.

And it is the people of this kind who make the world go forward. People who live selfish lives, whose efforts are devoted solely to acquiring for themselves without thought of service to others, do not advance the world or any good cause in it.

The success of the selfish man, even if he achieves what may be called success, is a bitter thing. It gives no pleasure to him or to anybody else. He is a man whom nobody loves or envies, or strives to emulate.

The greatest success in the world is to lead a clean, useful life. If a man does this he will be happy and contented, no matter what his work or his station.

And if we make a resolution, on the coming year New Year's Day, to lead a life of this kind during the coming year, there will be no need to worry about anything else. All the other things will take care of themselves.

Nothing Is Secret.

For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. St. Luke 8:17.

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